

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the  
Evening-Lecture

I N  
St. Thomas's, Southwark,

U P O N  
OCCASION of his LEAVING it.

By S. WRIGHT. *D.B.*  
*K*

II Epist. John, Ver. 8.

Βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν τὴν ἐργασίαν,  
ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν.

L O N D O N,

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and Crown in the Old Change. 1708.





T O M Y  
Worthy Friends,  
T H E  
M A N A G E R S  
A N D

To all that Encourage the  
Evening-Lecture in St.  
*Thomas's, Southwark.*

Gentlemen !

**T**HE Publick Thanks *which* other  
Societies, of the like Nature with  
yours, *have received from those they have*  
*chosen to Preach to them, may put You*  
A 2 very

*very justly upon looking for the same Acknowledgments : Nor would I in any Respect prove my self less grateful than others, when I have the same Reason, and a fit Opportunity, to show my Sense of the Favours conferred upon me.*

*THE Obligations I laid my self under, upon this Consideration, to give you a Sermon in Print some time or other before I left you, were such as allowed me no Liberty to dispute the Publishing of the following Discourse at your first Desiring it : Tho, indeed, when I excused my self from complying with former Requests of this kind, by promising once and again, that I would take some more proper Season for Gratifying you, I little thought I should so soon have been forced to make good my Word. However, if the Warning and Advice I here give you, be weigh'd and observed as it ought to be, I shall have no Reason to Repent of having Expos'd it to common View.*

*THE Subject I have chosen is of that Importance, that had I been to leave the World, when I left you, and could have breathed out my Soul in an Admonition, it should have been the very same with that in my Text. I shall make no Apologies*

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## The Dedication.

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*gies for treating you with so much Plainness and Freedom ; the Occasion will sufficiently bear me out in that. As I have endeavour'd to render this Discourse generally useful, and what may be of continual Service to you ; so I hope you will not peruse it as a Sermon, that in a Week or two you'll throw by, and reckon out of Date ; but keep it, and Read it as your constant Monitor.*

*My Heart's Desire and Prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved : and I most heartily wish you Success in what you do for the Salvation of others also. Grudge not your Contributions on such an Account : But be sincere and hearty in aiming at the promoting God's Glory ; and fear not but He will promote your Interest : you shall be rewarded in part at present, and in full when you come to a better World. The Devil has Multitudes acting for him, and carrying on his Designs of ruining, and destroying Souls, who stick at no Expence, are afraid of no Difficulties in serving their Lusts, and drawing others into the same Condemnation with themselves : Let this animate and excite your Industry and Concern to enlarge the Kingdom of Jesus Christ,*



Christ, *and to save Men from Hell, and Misery.*

*SEEING there are so many Clubs and Companies of profane, debauch'd Young Men, that bind themselves together to do wickedly ; learn even from them to be united in Love and Affection to one another, whilst you are doing and encouraging that which is Good :*

-----Fas est & ab hoste doceri.

*BUT let not your Evening-Sacrifice make you neglect the more necessary, and stated Appointments of the Day ; nor be substituted in the Room of Family and Closet Devotion. 'Tis better, indeed a thousand times better, you should be in a Place of Publick Worship, than Idling away your time in the Fields and needless Visits ; or more scandalously profaning it in Taverns and Public-houses : But don't think that this will excuse you from private and secret Duties. You must, if ever you expect to profit by what you hear, retire to Meditate upon it, and beg for a Blessing from above : which, if your Circumstances will not allow you to do, and to attend upon the Evening-Lecture also,*  
better

*better you were at home, than at this Exercise. But whatever some have said, God forbid that I should say any thing to weaken your Hands ; I only give you this hint to guard against the common, and most substantial Objection that has been urged to discountenance your Design in General.*

*I rejoice to hear of your unexpected Agreement in the Choice you have made ; and cannot but look upon it as a Token for Good. I would particularly here Advise to a constant, and serious Attendance on your Monthly Meeting for Prayer. You have found it very comfortable and successful heretofore, and you have abundant Reason to hope it will still be so. Now as you are a Religious Society, engag'd in the best Work, and aiming at the highest Ends ; so you must not only look to yourselves, but look to one another, that there be no profligate wicked Person amongst you : yea, look diligently lest any Man fail of the Grace of God, Heb. xii. 15.*

*I know you will expect I should now conclude, as it is fit I should, by turning this Address to you, into a Prayer for you : And this, with the Apostle, I pray, That your Love  
may*

may abound yet more and more in Knowledge, and in all Judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; That ye may be *sincere*, and *without Offence*, till the *Day of Christ*; being filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory, and Praise of God, *Phil. i. 9, 10, 11. And so nothing more remains, but to subscribe my self,*

*Austin-Fryars,  
Sept. 9. 1708.*

Gentlemen,

*Your Obliged, Hearty*

*Friend and Servant,*

S. WRIGHT.



A

# Farewell-Sermon,

Preach'd at the

Evening-Lecture, &c.

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II Epistle of *John*, 8th Verse.

*Look to your selves, that we lose  
not those things which we have  
wrought, but that we receive a  
full Reward.*

**I**T has been with a great deal of  
Pleasure I have for some time sta-  
tedly preach'd in this Place: and  
if any thing may be conjectured  
from the Face of an Auditory, I have  
abundant Reason to conclude you have  
with some Satisfaction given your At-  
tendance here also: The Consideration  
of which will, I hope, excuse any Dis-  
B order

order or Uneasiness I may discover at present in bidding you *Farewell*.

I have many a time thought with Wonder and Thankfulness, upon the Providence that cast me amongst you; and would now close this very *comfortable* Part of my *Work* and my *Life*; *FIRST*, In humblest Acknowledgments, and Adoration of that God, whose Grace alone has made my Endeavours, in any degree, acceptable and useful to you; intirely ascribing to him the Glory of every, even the least, Instance of Success: And *NEXT*, In Addressing my self more especially to those, that I have been any way Instrumental to promote the Seriousness of: This I know not how to do more aptly than by enlarging on this Subject; *Look to your selves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought.*

I shall not here trouble you with a critical Enquiry into what has been said concerning the *Author* of this *Epistle*; it being generally ascribed, and that with sufficient Proof and Evidence to the *Apostle John* \*. Nor shall I pre-

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\* See *Dr. Hammond*, and after him *Dr. Whitby*.

tend to determine whether it was directed to some *one* singularly Pious, and noted Person, with her Family \* ; or to some eminent Church and Society of Christians † ; but shall rather consider it as written for *our sakes* : and so it is an Exhortation to *Perseverance* in Christian Faith || and *Charity* |||, in opposition to all the *Deceivers* and *Deceits* that we may at any time meet with in our Profession. Thus our *Text* speaks the *Sum* and *Substance* of the whole *Epistle* ; and contains that *general* Admonition, which the preceding and following *Verses* more particularly *apply* and *urge* against the *Errors* and *Deceivers* of that *Time* in which it was at *first* writ. *Look to your selves that we lose not*, &c. Some *Copies* read the Words as they are rendered in the *Margin*, *Look to your selves that ye † lose not the things which ye*

\* Vid. Diod. & Poli Synopf. † See Dr. Whitby, who makes *κυρία* to signify the Lady and Mother of all other Churches ; which was the Church of Jerusalem : Here eminently called *ἐκλεκτῇ*, the Elect, as other Churches are stiled *συνεκλεκταί*, or elected together with her, 1 Pet. v. 13. || Ver. 9, 10. ||| Ver. 4, 5. † Ἀπολείπτε τὰ ἐργάσαθε, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλῆρη ἀπολάβετε. Steph. Alex. Colb. 7. vulg. Syr. Ethiop. Isidor. Oecum, &c. Vide Millii Græc. Testamentum.



*have gained, but that ye receive a full Reward.*

These different Readings we need not disturb our selves with, or stay upon, because what I shall offer from the former Part of the Verse may be advanced upon either of them; and the Argument in the latter Part of the Verse may be very well improved by keeping both in view. The Method in which I propose to proceed on this Subject will be,

- I. To consider the Danger we are in of losing those things which have been wrought in us.
- II. To show in what Respects we ought to look to our selves, that we may not be such Losers.
- III. To lay before you those Arguments our Text suggests to engage and excite to this Care, and looking to our selves.
- IV. Conclude with some suitable Application.

I. WE are in very great and apparent Danger of losing those things which have been wrought in us. Of losing

sing our warmest Convictions; of falling off from our present good Purposes and Intentions; of rebating and growing cold in our Zeal for God, and the promoting his Glory; of languishing in our Hope and Desire of Heaven; yea, in short, after all that we may have attained to, there is need of our utmost Care, *lest there should be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God* \*. For why should this Warning be given us, *to look to our selves*, if there was not danger of our drawing back from what we have already gained? Wherefore should the *Apostle Paul*, with so much Earnestness in all his Epistles, caution against Declensions and Apostacy †? To what purpose do's *St. Peter* call upon us to be *stedfast in the Faith* ||; and again, to *beware least being led away by the Error of the Wicked, we should fall from our own Stedfastness* ||||? Or what means the *Apostle James*, when he says, *Be patient, stablish your Hearts* ‡? Or what signifies

\* Heb. iii. 12. † 1 Cor. xv. 58. Gal. iii. 1. Phil. 27. Coloss. ii. 6, 7, 8. *with many other Places.* || 1 Pet. 7. 9. ||| 2 Pet. iii. 17. ‡ James V. 8.

St. Jude's admonishing us to *keep our selves in the Love of God*\*? Or finally, what can our Saviour himself intend by that *no Man having put his Hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God*†; if we be not in danger of losing what we have gained? But that you may see what Reason the first Publishers of Christianity had, and all the faithful Preachers of the Gospel still have, to insist upon such Cautions and Warnings as these; We may consider our Danger as it may be argued from the following Particulars.

§. 1. FROM our own *Inbred Corruptions*, and the *Deceitfulness* of our *Hearts*. There is Folly and Sin enough remaining in the wisest and best of Men to pervert and destroy them. It was no less a Person than the *Man after God's own Heart*, that complained of his being *so foolish and ignorant*, he was as a *Beast before God*||. There is still a great deal of the Brute, says one upon that Text|||, in him that has attained to be more than Man. The Saints themselves

\* Jude 21. † Luke ix. ult. || Psal. lxxiii. 22.  
||| Cruso's Sermons.



have sometimes been remarkable for the most surprizing Slips and Miscarriages ; such as, if they had not been followed with after bitter Repentance, would have ended in their Ruin and Destruction. Of the Truth of this *David* and *Peter* are known Instances : And if such Persons were so endangered by remaining Corruptions, how much more must We? whose Graces are weaker ; whose Corruptions are stronger ; whose Experiences are fewer, and less confirmed ; and who can never expect those Advantages in our Recovery, and Return to God, which they in abundant Mercy had granted to them. After a corrupt Inclination has been quiet and still a considerable time, so that you may think it is quite destroyed ; by some fresh Temptation or unthought of Provocation, it may be revived and excited with that Violence as to prevail over you again.

Y E A such is the Deceitfulness of the Heart, that he must be very ignorant of himself, who dare confide in it ; or trust his present Intentions and Purposes, tho seemingly never so sincere and upright. *The Heart is deceitful a-*

*bove all things, and desperately wicked* \*. We find it deceive us in its Boasts of *Power and Strength*; pretending to be a Match for the greatest Labours, yet sinking under some of the smallest Trials †. 'Tis deceitful in its Pretensions to *Wisdom and Knowledge*; puffing us up with a Conceit of our being sufficiently acquainted with the most obscure and difficult Parts of Religion; yet are often baffled and non-plust in common Cases. It is deceitful in its *Promises and Resolutions*; now intending one thing, and in a little time betraying us into the direct contrary; to day aiming at this, and to morrow pursuing a quite different End and Design ||. If therefore at present we should seem to be firmly honest, and settled in our Thoughts and Vows, yet our Hearts may prove false

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\* Jer. xvii. 9. † Propono me fortiter acturum sed cum modica Tentatio venerit magna mihi angustia fit, &c. Thom. a Kemp. de Imit. Christ. lib. 3. cap. 20. || Fili noli credere affectui tuo; qui nunc est, cito mutabitur in aliud. Quamdiu vixeris mutabilitati subjectus es etiam nolens; ut modo lætus, modo tristis; modo pacatus, modo turbatus; nunc devotus, nunc indevotus; nunc studiosus, nunc acediosus; nunc gravis, nunc levius inveniatis. Ibid. lib. 3. cap. 32.

to all; and so we may lose the things which are wrought in us |||. But,

§. 2. OUR Danger is further apparent from the *many Temptations without* us, which with restless Importunity urge and provoke our inward Corruptions. The World in which we live, the Concerns we are called to manage, the Persons with whom we converse, are all, in one respect or other, Temptations to us. Here a courting Scene of Pleasures, there a glittering Appearance of worldly Pomp and Gayety: Now a Prospect of Gain and Profit; then the flattering Hopes of Preferment and Honour, by turns ensnare and captivate the Mind. While we stand gazing upon, and parlying over these things, they secretly and undiscernedly wind themselves into our Hearts: They are so suitable to our natural Affections and Inclinations, as frequently to gain upon us before we are aware.

ADD to these the *Subtilty, Strength* and *Vigilance* of our *Adversary the Devil*, by whom they are all made use of

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||| This made a famous Saint with great Earnestness pray,  
Custodi, libera me a meipso, Deus.

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in the most Artful manner to effect our Ruin. Sometimes he prevails by *Force*; by the Strength and Suddenness of his Sollicitations: ~~Sometimes~~ he succeeds by *Fraud*, most cunningly contriving to ensnare us, by such means as carry us on without any Apprehensions of our Danger. And he is ever *watchful* to strike in with every Opportunity and Occasion that our Circumstances give him for the exerting either of his *Policy* or his *Power* \*.

SOMETIMES he will dress up a Sin in so recommending a manner, and give such *easy Names* to the *vilest Offences*, as takes off the *Frightfulness* of a Temptation; and by the Appearance of *Goodness* obtains our Favour. At other times he draws us into Evil by some *plausible Cover* and Excuse for our transgressing; teaching us to give some *fair Turn* to an *evil Action*, whereby we may ward off the Accusations of Conscience, and the Censures of others. Thus Da-

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\* Πολυδαῖς εἰσι, καὶ πολυῆσται αἱ τῆς Διαβόλου ἐπινοίαι; ἄλλον ἄλλως ὑπάγεται· πρὸς ὅπερ ἂν ἴδῃ ἐπιρρεπίσσειν, πρὸς ἐκείνο κέχρηται τοῖς ἰδίοις δολασμασιν. Basil. apud Suicer. Thes. Eccles. p. 852.

*vid* thought to secure himself from the Charge of Murder, by causing *Uriah* to be *slain in the Battel* †. Again, the Devil knows how to improve all Advantages that may arise from *Difference of Times or Places*; and so to make that appear *tolerable* at one Time and in one Place, which we should condemn as wicked and *abominable* in another: I mean in things absolutely unlawful. He knows also how to advance upon the *Measures and Degrees* of Sinning, so as to make that which in a *high* Degree we reckon *horrid Impiety*, in *lesser Measures* seem very *allowable*. He many times seduces by pleading the *general Use and Custom of the World*; yea, by setting before us the *Slips and Failings of Righteous Persons* themselves. And after all, by a little *Regret and Uneasiness*, which we *cannot help*, just after the Commission of a Crime, would encourage us to think all is well, and that our Iniquities are pardoned: By such things as these Persons are drawn more and more into a Familiarity with Sin, till they become more and more Insensible of the

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† 2 Sam xi.

Evil and the Danger of it ; and so by Degrees lose and fall off from what they had gained.

§. 3. THE *Instances* of those that have *seemingly had a great deal of Good in them*, who yet have *lost all* at last, do sadly prove, that it may be so with us. How many have we known, and heard of, that for a while have set their Faces as if they designed for Heaven, who yet afterwards have shamefully turned their Backs upon the Ways of God? Some, while they have been under external Restraints, that they could not easily break through, have seemed very orderly and hopeful ; when alas ! no sooner are those things that awed their Minds out of the way, but they indulge to all manner of Extravagancies : Such was the Case of *Joash*, who all the Days of *Jehoiada the Priest* offered continual *Burnt-Offerings in the Temple of God* ; and did that which was *right in the Sight of the Lord* ; yet as soon as *Jehoiada's* Eyes were closed, and his Head laid in the Dust, that he could no longer see or observe what was done ; the young King *left the House of the Lord God of his Fathers, and served Groves and Idols.*



*Idols* \*. So the Eye of a *godly Parent*, or the Preaching of an affectionate *serious Minister*, may for a time have a mighty Influence upon the Carriage and Behaviour of some, who immediately upon the Removal of these grow very loose and irreligious.

AGAIN, have we not frequently met with those that at their first setting out in the Affairs of this World, have set out very promisingly for another World too? That yet through a Hurry of Business, and an over-Sollicitousness for the present Life, have drowned the Voice of their Consciences, choaked the *good Seed* that has been *sown* in their Hearts, and have grown perfectly neglectful of the *one thing needful*. Nay, the very Blessings of Providence, and a *Tide* of Plenty and Prosperity, has carried away some to make *Shipwreck* of *Faith* and of a good Conscience.

ON the other hand, are there not those who as long as their *Interest* and Profit may be promoted, by taking up a *Form of Godliness*, seem very forward and zealous Professors? When on a sud-

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\* 2 Chron. xxiv.

den a being cheated or wrong'd by the Unfaithfulness of one that made the like Pretensions with themselves, shall unhinge their Thoughts, and put 'em quite out of Conceit with Religion: I say, the *like Pretensions with themselves*, because by their Apostatizing with them that do so, and on their Account, they declare to the World that their Profession is no better than that of the Persons they condemn, and cry out against. Yea, let them but change the *Knot* of their *Acquaintance*, and those that were *sober* and serious, while amongst the *Good*, will in a little time become vain and *vicious*, when cast amongst *those that are so*.

TO conclude this Head, Have there not been many Eminent and remarkable for a glaring show of Goodness, that have *eat and drunk in Christ's Presence*, and *done many wonderful Works in his Name* \*; who yet like Judas have at last *sold their Saviour*, and their *Heaven* for a few *Peices of Silver* †, and for mere Trifles? I need but appeal to your own Observation and Knowledge for

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\* Matth. vii. 22. † Matth. xxvi. 15, 16.

Instances of the Truth of all these: Would to God they were not so easily and frequently to be met with as they are at this day! Now that there have been *any* such shows our *Danger*; that there have been, and are so *many*, speaks it still the *greater*.

§. 4. THE *Decay of Seriousness* and strict Piety, even amongst those that keep up an *outward Profession of Religion*, may further influence to a forsaking of God, and losing the things that are wrought in us. When you come to converse with those that are reputed Righteous Persons, who you expect should assist your pious Inclinations, and cherish your Love to God, his Ordinances, and his Service; and find instead of this, a Coldness and Unaffectedness that strikes a Damp upon your Spirits, and leaves you under a Disappointment: When you shall see such as ought to be Examples of Piety and Holiness, remiss and careless in their Behaviour, loose and unguarded in their Conversation, and in short acting every way below their Character; you will find your selves very much shock'd and endangered, unless you are prepared



red to meet with these before-hand. If I may be allowed to speak plainly, from hence arises the greatest Danger of the Generality of those who are Beginners in Religion: The Imprudent, and to say the best, Inconvenient Liberties which many Professors allow themselves frequently in, I am satisfied, have been no small Disadvantage to some that have been their Companions and Observers. From hence it is, that many have taken Encouragement after a seeming Reformation, to return to their evil Ways with greater Eagerness than ever; and then looking upon all Religion as meer Pretence and Hypocrisy, fall beyond the Hope of Recovery. In short, the Ill Lives of those that pretend to be Christians, and are not; and the Weaknesses and Miscarriages of others that are Christians indeed; both the Devil, and our own corrupt Hearts, are ever ready to make the worst use of. So that if we have not *Wisdom* enough to make a right Interpretation of those Liberties that are lawful; or not *Steddynefs* enough, when we see others run into things that are unlawful, to Resolve that  
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that we will not be led away by them, let their Character be what it will ; we shall not long be able to maintain our standing, and our pious Intentions.

NOW laying all these things together, you cannot sure but be very sensible of the need of such an Admonition as this, *Look to your selves, that ye lose not the things which ye have gained ; or, that we lose not those things which we have wrought.* And that I may contribute as far as I am able to your Safety, and further Improvement, I shall next show,

II. IN what *Respects* we ought to look to our selves, that we may not be such Losers. This I shall enlarge on here, only by mentioning those things that are needful to give you the full Import and Intent of this Admonition ; \* designing some more particular Directions for the Close of this Discourse.

§. 1. WE are to get *well acquainted* with, and *firmly settled* in the *Belief* of

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\* βλέπειν significat oculis corporeis aliquid percipere, improprie autem & emphatice ad ψυχικὰς ὀφθαλμοὺς, ad oculos animi refertur : adeoque est cognoscere, intelligere ; diligenter attendere ; accuratè scrutari ; & sedulò cavere. Vide Suiceri Thesaur. Ecclesiast.

the *common* and *necessary Truths* of Religion : namely, the Being and Perfections of God : The Creation of Man in an upright and innocent State : The manner of his Apostacy ; and the Miseries we are thereby exposed to : The wonderful Contrivance of our Recovery by the Obedience and Sufferings of Jesus Christ : The Operation and Influences of the Holy Ghost in our Conversion and Sanctification ; together with those things that are required of us, as the indispensable Terms of our Acceptance and Peace with God : Stedfastly maintaining the Belief of the Resurrection from the Dead ; the Certainty of a Future Judgment ; and of Eternal Rewards and Punishments following thereupon. This, in short, is the Sum of Christianity ; and these are the Truths we ought to study, and seek after an Acquaintance with.

'TIS too common for Persons to take Religion upon Trust ; and to profess themselves Christians, because those about 'em, or their Parents before them, made such a Profession. These Men, not being sufficiently informed in the Nature and Reasons of what they pretend



tend to believe, no other can be expected but that they should easily give up their Pretensions; as soon as by these they are exposed to any Danger, put upon any Difficulty, or hindered and kept back from any present Interest and Preferment that lies in view. Nay, let 'em but converse freely with those who are able to say something against the Principles they have been bred up in a Reverence for, and they presently ascribe all to the Prejudice of Education, because they cannot defend themselves, and so resign their Cause to every weak Adversary. It would surprize one to hear the unaccountably wild and foolish Rattle of some that set themselves to run down Revelation; and to make a Scoff at those things that are most surely believed amongst us; and yet we find they meet with a Company of such as are ready to admire every thing they say. What can this be ascribed to in many, but gross Ignorance, accompany'd with strong Inclinations to be vicious and wicked?

*LOOK to your selves, that through your Unskilfulness in the Fundamentals of Religion, you be not betrayed into*

those Errors that shall carry you off from your present Convictions and Resolves. Set your selves in good earnest to study the Doctrine and Commands of the Gospel ; and to get so satisfy'd in the Reasonableness of Christianity, as that you may *always be ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you with Meekness and Fear* \*. Those that take up a Profession without being able to assign a good Reason for their doing so, will be as easily drawn off from their Profession, without being able to give a good Reason for that also. 'Tis Ignorance, God knows, 'tis Ignorance that ruins Thousands in our Day, in the midst of all their Pretensions to Wit and Knowledge.

§. 2. THIS Injunction *to look to our selves*, may further imply, and import, that we should keep up a *constant Sense* of our *own Frailty and Weakness* ; and a *jealous Fear* of our selves, lest we should *depart from God*. The less we are affected with the *Apprehension* of our Danger, the greater it *really is* ; for in this Sense it may especially be said, *Our Dan-*

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\* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

*ger ceases to be small or little, when once we begin to think it so: And I may safely add, that more have been lost by slight and contemning Thoughts of their Danger, than have been overcome by its real Greatness.*

A Presuming Hope of Heaven, and Eternal Felicity, that deadens and dulls our Endeavours, and Industry in striving against Sin and Temptation; and that encourages a slothful Security, is one of the most dangerous Symptoms of a growing Apostacy. When we begin to think we have done enough, and that our present Attainments are sufficient to Salvation, we shall soon lose our Ground, and very sensibly decline from what we have arrived at. When once we reckon our selves more holy than others, and in a Boast of our Righteousness think we have nothing to do, but to thank God that we are not as such, and such vile Offenders\*; this highly provokes the Blessed Spirit, and makes him withdraw from us: *For God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble* †. When therefore we find

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\* Luke xviii. 11. † James iv. 6.



that our Hopes and *Triumphs* are greater than our *Conquests*; that we grow in *Confidence* faster than in *Wisdom*; and our *Consolations* abound more than our *Graces*, 'tis by all means adviseable timely to check our selves, leaft by rising too high in our own Conceit, we make way for a lower Fall.

LET us also take heed that we be not deceived by mistaken Notions, concerning *Sins of Infirmary*: Looking upon those things as the Spots of God's Children, which are indeed the Marks of his Enemies. If once you are taught to call willful Sins, Weaknesses; and Transgressions that you indulge your selves in, unavoidable Infirmities; you will find Corruption upon such Encouragement prevailing more and more, whilst your Love to God and his Ways will languish and decay. Don't then think any *Sin* allowable, tho never so *small*; nor any *Grace* already attained, sufficient, tho never so *great*: Don't imagine your selves secure, and out of Danger, while you are in this State of Warfare; but rather, *Let us fear least a Promise being left us of entring into Eter-*  
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nal Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it ||.

§. 3. LOOKING to our selves imports, that we should *attend* with great Seriousness, and Care to the appointed Means of our Standing, and Progress. Such as Reading, Meditation, and Prayer; hearing the Word of God preached, and frequently partaking of the Lord's Supper.

WE must diligently read and study the *holy Scriptures*, these will make us *wise to Salvation*\*; and the more we are conversant with them, the better shall we be able to resist the Devil, to overcome the World, to subdue the Flesh; and so to stand against, and conquer all our spiritual Adversaries. It was by Scripture, that *Christ* himself defeated, and repulsed the Devil in all his Assaults †: And as this exposes the Wiles of the *old Serpent*, wisely teaching us to escape his Snares; so it also encourages against the *Terrours* of the *Roaring Lion*; and assures us, that *shortly, we shall tread Satan under our*

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|| Heb. iv. 1. \* 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Matth. iv. *begin.*

*Feet* ||. Again, by reading our Bibles, we shall learn to conquer the *World*, as we have there proposed the most *Illustrious Examples* of those that have done so; as we have there set before us in the clearest Light the *Vanity*, and *Vexation* of all *earthly* Things; and as we have there the Discovery of Things *infinitely better*, and more valuable to set our Hearts upon. Once more by acquainting our selves with Scripture, we shall be enabled to mortify the *Lusts of the Flesh*: As this urges the *strongest Arguments* against Sin; laying down those *Rules*, and *Directions* also which are most plain to be understood, most reasonable to be observed, and most apt to destroy Corruption in us. *Wherewith shall a young Man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word* \*. Thus the Knowledge of the sacred Writings will enable us to *withstand in the evil Day*, and at last to triumph over all our Souls Enemies: It is to the neglect of Reading, and Searching these Records, that we must ascribe the Degeneracy, and Apostacy of Multitudes in our Day.

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|| Rom. xvi. 20. \* Psal. cxix. 9.



But it is not enough to read, except you *Meditate* \* also in the Law of God; daily comparing your Lives and Actions with what you find enjoined, and recommended there.

TO this you must add constant and fervent *Prayer* †: For in vain do you hope to preserve or improve the things which you have gained, if you do not continually look up to God for *Establishing, Assisting* Grace: When once you grow cold, and negligent in your Devotions, you'll soon grow careless in your Behaviour. Further, take heed that you do not *forsake the Assembling of your selves together, as the manner of some is* ||: But *in season, and out of season* ‡, as you have Opportunity, attend to the Preaching of the Gospel: Desire the *sincere Milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby* |||. This will be a means to convict of Sin, that otherwise you might unwarily go on in: To inform of Duty, that without this you might live in the Neglect of: To administer that Consolation and Peace, which you may other-

\* Psal. i. 2. † 1 Pet. iv. 7. Luke xxii. 40. || Heb. x. 25. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 2. ||| 1 Pet. ii. 2.

wife in vain seek after. This will rouse and quicken when sluggish and dull ; will be your Remembrancer when thoughtless and forgetful ; and, in a word, is appointed by God to *build you up* \* in your most holy Faith.

AFTER all the great and chief Institution of the Gospel for our Confirmation, and Growth in Grace, is the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*. This you can no more answer for living in the Neglect of, than you can for the Omission of Praying, Reading, or any of the afore-mentioned Duties : Nor can you ever expect to be in so strengthened, steadfast, and settled a State, while you stand off from this, as you may promise your selves by a serious, frequent Attendance upon it, to be brought into †. Let the Profane Part of the World say what they can in Contempt of such Pre-

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\* Acts xx. 32. † Necessarium quidem mihi est, qui tam sæpe laboro, & pecco ; tam cito torpesco, & deficio ; ut per frequentes Orationes, & Confessiones, ac sacram corporis tui perceptionem, me renovem, mun-dem, & accendam : ne fortè diutius abstinendo à sancto proposito defluam—Retrahit sancta communio à malo, & confortat in bono, &c. De Imit. Christ. lib. 4. cap. 3.

scriptions, 'tis undoubtedly proved from the Success which a conscientious Observance thereof has been accompanied with, that there is a very great Aptness in all of them to promote true Piety and Godliness. 'Tis without Contradiction to be remarked, that those who have most applied themselves to these Instrumental Duties of Religion, have been the holiest and best Christians: When on the contrary, those who have neglected, or made light of them, have soon abandon'd all Virtue, and good Manners. I therefore repeat it, *Look to your selves*, that you diligently attend to the Means appointed for your Establishment and Preservation.

§. 4. THIS Admonition implies, that we should *carefully guard* against all those Errors and Deceivers that would draw us from our Faith and Obedience. The Apostle having spoke of *many Deceivers that were entred into the World*, immediately subjoins, *Look to your selves*, (i. e.) that you be not ensnared, and led away by such \*. St. John's cautioning against

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\* βλέπε & βλέπετε sunt φοβῆν[το] ῥήματα, seu locutiones quibus utimur erga eos, quos hortamur ad aliquid sedulo cavendum. Suic. Thesaur.



the spreading Heresies and Impieties of his time, may very well be interpreted as a Warning against those of every Age: Let us therefore beware, least we should be seduced by the Errors that are now most prevailing in the midst of us.

A R E there not many who openly talk against all Goodness and Sobriety? Making a Jest of, and profaning the sacred Oracles? Denying the Lord that bought 'em, and *trampling upon the Blood of the Covenant as an unholy thing*? Who think themselves *witty* in our Day for asserting that which in *David's* time was reckoned the Mark of a Fool \*; *The Fool hath said in his Heart there is no God*: We ought with Abhorrence to fly from the Conversation of such. Are there not others again, who setting up for what they call *natural Religion*, would sink the *Gospel* into a mere *human Contrivance*; and seem to have no higher a Veneration for it, than as it serves the Designs, and Ends of a Civil Government? Christianity in the first Ages thereof was despised, and its Professors

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\* Psal. xiv. 1.

every where spoken against, because the *Princes* and Rulers of the World espoused it *not* ; and now its Divinity is called in question, because they *do* embrace it : When it was *persecuted* by Law, then it was reckon'd Impotent and Contemptible, and what could not be from God on that account : When it is *established* by Law, then its Power, Authority and Influence, must be owing to that, and not to any thing supernatural. This is such strange Perverseness, that sure I need not stay to expose, or caution against it.

BUT there are another kind of Persons we ought to be more afraid of than these ; and they are such as have once made a Profession of *Religion* : Have seen something of the Promised Land, who yet through their Unbelief have left off to serve the Lord, and to seek his Kingdom ; and so have brought up an evil Report concerning the *Heavenly Canaan*, and the *Way* that leads there-to \*. Let not your Hearts or Hopes fail you by any thing that such Persons may say to *deter* you from the Ways of

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\* Numb. xiii. 32.

God, or to *allure* and draw you after themselves into the same Apostacy, and *Condemnation*: But take heed that others Declensions don't make you decline.

BEFORE I pass from this Head, let me caution you to beware of the licentious, Hypocritical Professor, who while he makes a *large Profession*, *lives at large too*; and allows himself in those things that to accompany him in, will greatly expose, and endanger you. You know the Religion now in Fashion is that which gives abundance of Liberty; and we hear our Forefathers, in one Company after another, complained of, as imposing unnecessary Burdens: But let not you and I ever show our selves pleased, or hasty to joyn in, with such Talk as that; least by parting with those things which were very well contrived to be a *Defence* to our Piety, we should lay our selves open to further, and *bold* *der Assaults*. And remember this too; that when we get to Heaven, we shall not look back upon any thing we have done as needless; or so as to think we put our selves to over-much Expence and Trouble, in striving for that Glory: But Thousands will find themselves dis-



disappointed, that now think they have done enough; and after all their *Confidence* in *this* World, will be asham'd and *confounded* in the *next*. These Hints, if understood as they are intended, may I hope be of some Service to preserve and assist you in the Ways of God. That they may be so I shall next,

III. L A Y before you those *Arguments* our Text suggests, to engage, and *excite* to this Care of, and *looking to our selves*. The different Reading of the Words, I shall now beg leave to take the Advantage of; as proposing distinct Arguments to us, and these equally suitable, and proper to be insisted on.

§. 1. IF you lose what has been wrought in you, *your Labour* and *ours hitherto* will be *in vain*.

A L L that Y O U have done, and suffer'd in the Profession of Religion heretofore, will be unavailable if you now draw back: All your Struggles against Sin, your Prayers, your Tears, your most laboured Services, and Performances, your Mortifications, your Alms, yea your Faith in a crucified Jesus, will  
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be of no Benefit to you, if you do not persist in your Duty. The Prophet is very express in this Matter when he tells us †, *that if the Righteous turneth away from his Righteousness; and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations of the Wicked; all his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mention'd: In his Trespasse that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he dye.* And O what a Pity is it, that after a Man has gone through some Hardships and Difficulties in his aiming at Salvation, he should strive to no purpose, because he did not strive a little longer! That he should lose the Satisfaction and Comfort of all that's past, by giving out before he comes to the End of the Race! Nay further, you will not only have labour'd to no Advantage; but the Thoughts of what you had attained to will make your Misery the greater, in coming short of the Prize. The higher you are now lift up towards Heaven in Privileges, in Hopes, in Attainments, the lower will you sink into

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† Ezek. xviii. 24.

Hell upon your falling from thence. The more you have seen of Heaven, and known of God, the more intolerable will a State of Banishment, and Absence be. For those that had taken a View of the Land of Promise, and tasted the Fruits thereof, to be turned back again to dye in the Wilderness, must certainly be more grievous than to have been cut off before they reached the Borders of that Country: So for those that have had a Prospect of the World above, whose *Mountains* are *Spices*, whose *Rivers* are *Pleasures*, and in one Word, is all a *Paradise*; (for such I say) to be cast into a *Lake of Fire* and *Brimstone*, how extremely tormenting must this be?

THINK again; whilst you are such miserable Losers your selves, WE also that have wrought these things in you, shall in some Measure *lose our Labour* too. All our earnest Supplications, and Intercessions with you, and on your Behalf, will not obtain any Favour, or Mercy for you: All our Sermons, and Discourses, which have cost us many a solicitous Thought to render useful, and serviceable to your Salvation;  
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and in the studying of which we have spent a great deal of our Time, and Strength, will all be in vain as to you. Tho, blessed be God, we are assured they shall not be lost as to our selves; for when the Prophet complained, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain*; yet He could add with a great deal of Assurance, *Surely my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work, or my Reward, with my God* \*. However, if such as lose what we have wrought in them could make our Endeavours wholly useless, and successful by their Declension, 'tis evident we should study, and pray, and toil for Nought. But,

§. 2. IF you keep, and improve what you have gained, *your Reward, and ours will be full, and glorious*. 'Tis said to be a *Full Reward*, with respect to that *imperfect* one which we have at present. For *something* of a Reward, both you and we have *now*, if you *stand fast in the Lord* †: YOU may have a great many *outward Mercies*, and Blessings bestowed upon you; and you

\* Isa. xlix. 4. † 1 Thess. iii. 8.

shall enjoy an *inward Tranquillity*, and the *Earnests* of future Happiness, that are worth more than all the World: Whilst WE are *filled with Joy for your Sakes before God* ||, thinking and speaking of you continually, in our Addresses to the Throne of Grace, with great Thankfulness for the Success of our Labours. But there is a Time coming, when both they that Preach, and them that Believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, shall have a more perfect, and compleat Reward.

YOU shall receive a *Full Reward*. Full in the Perfection of all your *Graces*; full to the compleating of all your *Joys* and *Comforts*; full to the utmost Extent of all your *Wishes* and *Expectations*; and full in the *endless Duration* of it. Here you have many Imperfections, and remaining Corruptions, that very much hinder you in the delightful Exercise, and Improvement of those Graces that are planted in your Hearts, but see that you lose not the things that are wrought in you, and in a little while (to instance in one Grace) your *Love* will

be all *Rapture* : That which is now compared to the *Smoaking Flax*, will then be like the *Seraphs Flames*. Here you *see but in part*, and *know but in part*; your Comforts are mixed with many a troublesome perplexing Thought, but *look to your selves, that you lose not what you have gained*; and it will not be long e'er you shall see as you are seen, know as you are known \*, and without any Interruption, or Uneasiness, drink of those pure unmingled Streams of Bliss, that issue from the Throne of God, and of the Lamb. The Pleasure you now have in *Believing*, and *expecting* will then be full in the *Fruition*, and *Enjoying*. Now you are afraid of being deprived of your Consolations, but continue faithful unto Death, and your Reward will be full also in the everlasting Continuance of your Felicity. See then that ye cherish, and improve what you have gained; that what is now in *Part*, may come to *Perfection*; and what you now have in the *Earnests*, and *Foretasts*, you may hereafter have in *Full*.

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\* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.



TO this let me now subjoin, that WE, who have been Instrumental to bring you to that Happiness, shall by your Salvation receive a more *full*, and glorious Reward too. St. Paul calls his *Philippians* his *Joy*, and his *Crown* †: And all those who are with him, Instruments of converting Souls to God, will have greater Honour, and Glory reflected upon 'em by such, than by the Brightest Crown that ever Adorned the Head of the Greatest Monarch. From this will result, and flow an inexpressible Joy. So that if you would add to our Honour, and Felicity at the last Day; if you are desirous of our being *Great in the Kingdom of Heaven* ||, *Look to your selves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought; but that we receive a full Reward.*

IV. **I**T now remains that I should more *particularly Apply* my self to you, on the *Occasion* of my being *called from amongst you*. And,

FIRST, I would beg leave to digress from my Text a while, that I

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† Phil. iv. 1. || Matth. v. 19.

may speak something to those who have *gained nothing* by their Attendance here; in whom *no good thing* has been wrought by all that has been said from time to time, but they are still *dead in Trespasses, and Sins*.

MUST I leave you in such a Condition as this? And can you think of our Meeting at the Day of Judgment in such a State? That's a dreadful Thought indeed: And yet I fear as to any thing I can do for you, it must be so: For if all *former* Discourses, and Pleadings with you have been lost, what can I *now* say that shall move and affect you? I have but a very little time left to expostulate with you: As soon as the present Hour is concluded I have done, and must commit you to the Mercy of God, and those that shall come after: All that I can now attempt, will be but just to mention those Heads of Argument which I have heretofore enlarged upon. If you have unconcernedly sat under the hearing of these when more fully explained, and enforced, what can I expect from the meer proposing of 'em? I have only this Encouragement to hope for your  
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greater Regards, that as I am now taking my leave of you, so your Attention to what I say may be stricter, and on that account something may fix, and abide the longer in your Thoughts: If the Spirit of God does but inwardly move and work upon your Hearts a Hint, a Word will be enough to convert a Soul. And O that I might be more successful in my last Attempts, than in all former ones! That you, and I may not be *parted for ever* in another World; but may meet with Joy, and have occasion then to speak of our *present parting*, and of this very Evening with eternal Thankfulness, and Praise.

HEAR then, and *repent* while it is called to Day, don't harden your Hearts, or stop your Ears against the present repeated Invitations of the Gospel, as you have done in times past. GOD calls from Heaven, *Turn ye, turn ye*, for why will ye dye? He offers you Grace, and Glory: He has told you what a Pleasure it would be to him, to see you penitent and serious. His *Holiness* and Hatred of Sin, His *Justice*, and Threatnings to punish it; His *Power*, whereby he is able to



destroy both Soul, and Body in Hell ; His *Mercy*, and *Goodness*, which proclaims Pardon, and Favour to such as Return to Him ; do all loudly speak the Duty, and Advantage of forsaking your Sins, and living unto God. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST calls to you ; and conjures you by his Death, and Passion, by his Agonies, and Blood to repent, and be converted ; and tells you, that without this all his Sufferings, and Merits will not save you : He points to his wounded Head, Heart, and Side ; to his Cross, his Spear, his Crown of Thorns, and by these he beseeches you to be reconciled to God : Again, he points to a Throne of Glory, and to the Mansions of Bliss, and these he promises to give you if you will but believe in Him. The HOLY GHOST is striving in you, and with you, and by every Conviction speaks the same Language. The Blessed ANGELS are waiting for, and would Rejoyce at your Conversion. The SPIRITS of JUST MEN made Perfect, are now in Raptures, and Extasies, thinking on the time when they were first perswaded to Return to the Lord. If  
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these things won't affect you, look to yonder **BURNING LAKE**, whether a sinful Life will lead you, and where the *way* you are walking in *ends*: Can you lye down with those Flames? Can you dwell with those Everlasting Burnings? Are all the Cries, and Groans, and Terrors of the Damned; their *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their Teeth*, nothing to you? Are all their wounding Reflections on their Folly, and Madnes in despising the *Warnings which you now have*, of no weight with you? Are these things to be slept over, or carelessly attended to? If nothing will affect but what's within the Reach of Sense, look round thee, Sinner, in this **WORLD** where thou livest! Are all the *Tears* of **GOOD MEN** for thy Sins, their *fervent Prayers*, and Cries for thy Conversion, as an empty Sound in thine Ears? Are all the **DEATH-BED WARNINGS**, and Terrors of those that have spent their Lives in a Course of Sin, of no force with thee? Are all the **JUDGMENTS** of God upon profane impenitent Sinners, contemptible in thy Sight? And all his **MERCIES** towards



wards them that fear his Name, in no respect valuable, and desirous? Think, foolish obstinate Creature, what it is all these call thee to: It is to thine own **HAPPINESS**, and wilt thou not yet be perswaded? Must I be beat off, and repulsed with all these Arguments in my Mouth? O ungrateful to God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit! Unkind, and uncivil to the Messengers of these things! And barbarously Cruel to thy self! Must I be sent away with a final Refusal, and Denial? No, I have one way more yet left; if the Sinner will not hear, *Lord, I'll look, and pray to thee, who canst make him hear, and feel, and yeild in a Moment! Thou knowest how to fasten a Conviction, so as that it shall never wear off; O glorify the Riches of thy Grace and Power, in making one Soul willing this Day; that this may be a time to be remembred on that account.* But I must turn my self again to you, that I may,

**SECONDLY**, Suit my Discourse to those who have been under *Convictions*, and have had some good *Designs*, and *Purposes* form'd in them; but have never truly complied with, and acted ac-  
cording



*according to them.* Do you consider these Impressions as the Beginnings of your Salvation; and the Work of that Spirit, who hereby offers to conduct you to, and make you fit for Heaven, and will you stifle, and lose them? Shall all the good Resolves you have made one time after another, only serve to be so many Witnesses against you at the last Judgment? Or do you think that these alone, are sufficient to save you? Be not deceived, your *Consciences* will never be put off with empty Promises, and ineffectual Designs, when they come to speak out, whatever they may do under the Restraints you have now laid upon 'em. *God* will never regard these, except it be out of your own Mouths to condemn you: For to exclaim against this, and that Course of Life you go on in; and resolve against Sin when you design nothing further than to resolve against it; is but to do just enough to accuse your selves at the Bar of *God*, and plead guilty to the Indictment drawn up against you. And, O think what a dismal Day that will be, which shall present you with a full View of all your broken false Purposes; and of  
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the Convictions which have left you incorrigible and unreformed.

By this time, it may be, some that have forgot, and worn out a great many very strong and warm Impressions, are now again purposing and resolving in themselves; their Convictions are renewed and revived this Evening; but will you not go away, and seek to get rid of these, as you have done of former ones? Is there any Soul that I may be allowed to make Answer for, and to say, that your present serious Thoughts shall not be suppressed, and discouraged as those heretofore have been? Sure I may suppose it the Language of some one Person in this Assembly, *I am now more perswaded, and determined than ever; from this Moment I will set my self to seek, and to serve the Lord*: If I do herein speak the Sense of any, let me urge the Matter further; and again ask, Will you hold to this, and be as good as your Word? Pardon me if I know not how to trust you; there is abundant Reason to be jealous of you; yea methinks you should be afraid of trusting your selves; who have so often been like a *deceitful Bow* that  
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that slips the String, and drops the Arrow at your Foot, when it should carry it to the designed Mark. God himself speaks of such Persons as you are, like one that knows not what to do with you; O Ephraim, *what shall I do unto thee?* O Judah, *what shall I do unto thee* \*? If you search into the Occasion of God's thus Reasoning with himself, you will find it exactly your own Case; even the Treachery of those, who sometimes seem for a little to be good, but *their Goodness is as the Morning-Cloud, and as the early Dew it passeth away*: They begin by fits and starts to seek the Lord, but they will not follow on, to know him; and so deal deceitfully with him. Now we may suppose God (to speak after the manner of Men) thus arguing over such; "O Soul, how shall I deal with thee? Shall I utterly forsake, and abandon thee? Shall I now cut thee off, and destroy thee? This I am not willing to do, because there seems to be something of Good in thee? But shall I spare, and try thee longer? Alas! I have done it so often upon

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\* Hof. vi. 4.

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“ thy fair Offers, and Promises, which  
“ have all come to nothing, that there  
“ is no Reason to think thou wilt  
“ prove thy self sincere : *What shall I*  
“ *do unto thee?*

O! dare not any more to prove false, and perfidious, least this should be the last time that God will thus strive with you : For consider this, that every stifled Conviction leaves *you* more *stubborn*, and hard to be wrought upon ; while the *Operations*, and Influences of the *Spirit* are *weakened* also by every Resistance. Generally speaking, those Persons who, after great Struggles and Debates in themselves betwixt Conscience and Corruption, continue impenitent and unreformed, do in the end become the most profligate notorious Sinners : But if you should be brought to Repentance hereafter, you will find this a very wounding, afflicting Thought above all others, that you have so often quench'd the Spirit, and broke through your solemn Purposes, and Resolves : I could in this very Place point to a remarkable Instance, and Witness of this. These things I leave with you, as some of the most important, and affecting I could

could think of, that are pertinent, and suitable to your Case.

THIRDLY, I would shut up all in a few Words to *those of you*, who are so far advanced as to make *an outward Profession of Religion*; and have seemingly devoted your selves to the Service of Christ. It was for your sakes I chose the Text I have been insisting on, and have suited my Discourse all along to your Case. I shall not here repeat any thing that has been said; but desire you would look back to those *Admonitions* under the *second General*, and make them all your own by a *particular Application* of them to your selves, as if here more distinctly appropriated and address'd to you. Only to these I shall now add the *following Directions* as necessary to be observed in looking to your selves, that you may not lose what is wrought in you: These I leave with you as my last Advice from God, and the best I am capable of giving you.

(1.) BEWARE of *prizing too highly the things of this World*. There is nothing more evidently the Design of Christianity than this, to raise our Expectations above all *temporal Enjoyments*,  
and



and to greaten our Souls above all *temporal Calamities*. Christ's obliging his *first Followers* to forsake all *actually*, that they might be his Disciples, undoubtedly proves the Necessity of our forsaking all *intentionally*, and if called to it when we promise to follow him. The true *Genius* of a *Christian* is to *esteem all worldly things just as they tend to promote the Glory of the Great God, and the eternal Welfare of his Soul, and no otherwise*. But where only the Hopes of present Prosperity, or the Fears of present Adversity put us upon professing ourselves the *Disciples of Christ*, we shall be as ready on the Account of these to *renounce* our Profession, as we are to *take it up*. DEMAS *hath forsaken me*, says the *Apostle*, *having loved this present World* \*. An unreasonable Fear of Poverty, or any other worldly Evil, and an ambitious Thirst after Honour, and great things here, will soon betray us into the ways of Sin, and Falshood; and so we shall *shamefully end in the Flesh*, after we have *seemingly begun in the Spirit* †. 'Tis therefore necessary

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\* 2 Tim. iv. 10. † Gal. iii. 3.



to your Safety, and Progress in that which is good, that you should carefully subdue, and watch against all eager Desires after, and sollicitous perplexing Fears of losing present Enjoyments \*. Take care that you do not too *highly value* these things; and then the *Gain* of 'em will neither unduly *lift you up*, to forget God, and your *present Intentions*; nor the *Loss* of 'em *discourage* you in, and *unfit* you for your *Duty*.

(2.) AVOID, as much as you can, *all Occasions of Sinning*. Don't be too forward to venture your selves in those *Places*, or amongst those Persons that may prove a Share to you. Let not a vain Conceit of your own *Strength*, or an ungrounded Dependance on Divine *Grace*, and *Assistance*, ever carry you presumptuously within the Reach of Temptation. And when at any time you are forced into the midst of Danger, be sure to keep your selves under the strictest Watch. If you once begin

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\* Rectius vives, Licini, neque Altum  
Semper urgendo; neque, dum procellas  
Cautus horrescis, nimium præmendo.  
Littus Iniquum. Hor. Lib. x. Ode 10.

to look upon the Occasions, and Opportunities of Sinning with Familiarity, and Pleasure, you will find your selves carry'd by degrees from that Rectitude and Uprightness which the *Fear of the Lord* would preserve you in. We usually see those who are best able to *withstand* a Temptation most careful to *avoid* one: And however your *Confidence* improves, you have Reason to suspect your *Wisdom*, and your *Grace* declines when you grow bold, and free with any thing that has an *apparent Tendency* to draw you from your Integrity. You cannot say to a Temptation, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further*; but little Compliances make way for *larger*, and so you are sometimes from *small Beginnings* press'd on to very *great Miscarriages*. Let Corruptions within you, let Friends about you, plead the Lawfulness of this and the other Indulgence of Sense, and the Body never so much; yet if you have been drawn into Sin by what they invite you to, you ought to resist the Perswasions, and abstain from it. Good Men have in all Ages found it necessary to *deny* themselves even some things that might be *lawful*, thereby



by to *guard* against such as are *unlawful*.

(3.) WHEN at any time you are *surprized*, and *drawn into Evil*, let your *Repentance*, and *Return to your Duty* be *as speedy as possible*. The longer you go on in a State of *Insensibility*, the further you will be driven into *Declensions* and *Decays*. While you continue *impenitent*, the Spirit of God is withdrawn from you, and the Devil takes that *Advantage* to hurry into one Sin after another, that he may drive us as far as he can from God, and from a Disposition to return to him. Such was the *Apostacy* of *David*; Not *Repenting* immediately after his committing *Adultery* with *Bathsheba*; He next contrives to *murder Urias*; And these Sins one after another so *stupified* his *Conscience*, and provoked the *Divine Spirit*, that he was left to go on in a *declining State* for a considerable time together; and if God had not by an *extraordinary Message* \* from himself brought him to a *Sense* of his *Condition*, he seems to have been in very great danger of losing

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\* 2 Sam. xi, xii.



all that had been wrought in him. 'Tis worth our observing, that in the *Christian Armour* there is no *Back-Plate*; no Defence or Security, if once we begin to flee, but we are driven before our spiritual Enemies, till we face 'em again; and then we are compleatly armed from Head to Foot\*, with such Armour as is Proof against all the fiery Darts of the Devil. Those that are in the way to Heaven are aptly enough compared to the *Angels* on *Jacob's Ladder* †, all either *ascending*, or *descending*; none standing still: If once we slip, and lose our Ground, we shall continue falling lower and lower, till we Recover, and Rise again. Don't therefore put off for a Day, no not for a Moment, your Repentance after the Commission of any Sin that Conscience smites, and rebukes you for; but while your Hearts are tender, and while your Transgression appears in all its aggravating Circumstances, humble your selves before God for it, and immediately again set

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\* See Ephes. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17. † Gen. xxyiii. 12.

about your Duty. Thus instead of losing what you have gained, your very *Falls* will be a Means to make you rise the higher; and your very *Slips* will make you walk more watchfully, and steddily. Don't be *discouraged* when you find your selves *overtaken* with a Temptation; for if your Hearts and your Courage fail, you will presently give up all, and so lose what you have attained: But up again, and strive, and pray with greater Earnestness, and Vigour, and in a little time you shall be Conquerors over all.

(4.) AIM at something *Eminent*, and *Exemplary* in the *Practice of Religion*. Don't think it enough that you are not so *bad*, as the *worst*, but strive to *equal*, yea *exceed* the *best*. Let not the Negligence of any make you remiss, but rather let *your* Devotion warm, and fire the Breasts of others. Live and act as those that reckon it the highest Advancement to be called the Servants of God; and that esteem it their greatest Honour to promote his Glory in the World. This will make you Blessings in the Places where you live, and will afford the truest Pleasure, and Satisfaction



tisfaction to your Souls ||. Look to those that have been famous in the foregoing Age, for their publick Usefulness and Zeal in the Things of God; whose Memory is yet precious, and blessed amongst the Saints: And strive to rise up in their Place and Stead to adorn your Profession, and to serve your Generation by the same *Great Acts* of Piety, and Holiness. Thus by *improving* you will be effectually secured from *losing* the things you have gained.

LASTLY, Take heed of *relying* upon your *own Purposes* or *Endeavours* while you comply with these *Injunctions*. You ought to *Look to your selves*, but by no means to *Trust to your selves*. It is by *Faith* alone that we stand \*; and by a continued Communication of Grace, and Strength from *Jesus Christ* as our vital Head, that we are preserved from falling. Let us sincerely commit our Souls to him in well-doing, and we may depend upon it that he will *bring us to*

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|| Hoc opus, hoc studium parvi properemus & Ampli  
Si Patriæ volumus, si nobis vivere cari.

Hor. Epist. ad Jul. Flor.

\* Rom. xi. 20.



Glory, Honour, and Immortality? Of our selves we can do nothing, but *his Grace* is in every Trial, and Condition *sufficient for us* †. Let the *Iron* be hung up in the Air within the Embraces and Influences of the *Loadstone*, and it is secure from falling; but let it for a Moment be *separated* from it, and its *own Weight*, and natural Motion will immediately carry it to the Ground: So our *Hearts* will easily *bear up* against the *Attractions* of *Earth* as long as they are *drawn*, and upheld by *Grace from above*; but let us once *forfeit*, and lose that, and our own *natural Propensions* will presently *sink* us. As long therefore as we keep close to *Christ*; and maintain our *Confidence*, and *Faith* in him by a *careful* and *conscientious Performance* of every known *Duty*, we are safe, but no longer ||. Such as are thus devoted to him, he is interceding for the Preservation of, and therefore no doubt but they shall be secure. *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be*

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† 2 Cor. xii. 9. | 2 Theff. iii. 3, 4.

one as we are \*. In the Lord we have Righteousness, and Strength †: The one for our Justification in the Sight of God; the other for our Assistance against all our Enemies: So that tho our Case be dangerous enough to awaken our Concern and Vigilance, yet 'tis hopeful enough to encourage against all Despondency, and Distrust.

|| Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling; and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy: To the only wise God, our Saviour, be Glory, and Majesty, Dominion, and Power, both now, and ever. Amen.

\* John xvii. 11. † Isa. xlv. 24. || Jude 24, 25.

**FINIS.**

26-11-66

